

## Complaint Handling Policy

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Eastern Waste Management Authority herein referred to as East Waste is committed to achieving customer service excellence by striving to deliver services in a professional, coordinated and timely manner. East Waste is focussed on continuous improvement and proactively looks for all opportunities to improve systems/processes. As such, East Waste recognises that feedback and complaints provide the organisation with an opportunity to improve practices and procedures, as well as resolving matters of concern for our customers.
- 1.2. East Waste will aim to resolve any issues of concern for our customers at the first point of contact wherever possible. However, for issues that are unable to be resolved at the first point of contact, this Policy has been designed to provide a fair, consistent and structured process for East Waste's customers to follow should they wish to lodge a complaint.
- 1.3. Additionally, the Policy sets out the principles and guidelines to be used when addressing complaints made about the actions of East Waste, the Board and Committee members, and/or its Employees.

### 2. Definitions

- 2.1. **Complaint** means an expression of dissatisfaction with a product, service or behaviour delivered by East Waste or its representatives that has failed to reach the standard stated, implied or expected after the initial point of contact. This may include an expression of dissatisfaction about a service that has been, or should have been delivered, but does not include matters outside of East Waste's responsibility.
- 2.2. **Customer** means a person who is utilising services or products provided by East Waste and includes external customers being any member Council, their staff and/or residents, members of the public or organisations that have any form of dealings with East Waste.
- 2.3. **Employee** means any person performing work on behalf of East Waste, including the General Manager, Managers, Board Members and Employees employed on a full time, part time, casual or contract basis and Persons providing services to, or on behalf of East Waste, even though they may be employed by another party.
- 2.4. **Feedback** can take the form of comments, both positive and negative about services provided by East Waste without necessarily requiring corrective action, change of services or review of decision. Feedback may however, influence future service reviews and delivery methods. East Waste welcomes feedback of all types as an important way of continually improving and monitoring its service standards.

### 3. Principles

- 3.1. **People Focus:** East Waste is open to feedback and/or complaints from all parties including members of the public about decisions, products, services, programs, employees, or the resolution of a complaint.
- 3.2. **Transparency:** East Waste publicises how and where complaints may be made and will make the process of complaint resolution and investigation easy for complainants to access and understand, whilst being flexible in how complaints may be made to or about East Waste.
- 3.3. **Responsiveness:** Complaints are acknowledged promptly and addressed according to urgency. The complainant is kept informed throughout the process. East Waste is genuine in its communication and follows through on its promises. East Waste is outcome focussed and will seek a satisfactory resolution wherever possible.
- 3.4. **Fairness:** To ensure the complaint handling process is fair and reasonable, complaints are dealt with in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner. East Waste will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected because a complaint is made by them or on their behalf.
- 3.5. **Support:** East Waste supports and assists customers who want help to provide feedback and/or make a complaint. There are opportunities for internal and external review and/or appeal about the organisation's response to the complaint, and complainants are informed about these avenues when applicable.
- 3.6. **Confidentiality:** Where possible personal information related to complaints will be kept confidential. The confidentiality of information related to a complaint will be respected with complaints about employees being kept confidential throughout the investigation process.
- 3.7. **Accountability:** Accountabilities for complaint handling are clearly established, and complaints and responses are monitored and regularly reported to management. East Waste Staff have appropriate authority and guidance to resolve issues that commonly arise in the resolution of complaints. East Waste provides appropriate training, support and resources to employees who are responding to complaints.
- 3.8. **Continuous Improvement:** Complaints represent an opportunity for improvement in East Waste's internal procedures and processes and support ongoing customer satisfaction monitoring.

### 4. Complaint Handling Methodology

- 4.1. East Waste aims to resolve customers queries, concerns and requests for service at the first point of contact wherever possible. However, in circumstances where an issue is unable to be resolved following the initial point of contact and the issue is deemed to be a complaint then the steps outlined may be enacted.
- 4.2. **Complaint escalated to a more senior staff member**

Where it is not possible to resolve a matter at the initial point of contact and the matter is considered to be a complaint, East Waste staff may escalate the complaint to an appropriate senior staff member. This may occur, for example, when the frontline staff member has been

involved in the matter that is the subject of the complaint, or when the complaint is about an issue that is above the staff member's delegation or requires a decision to be made at a more senior level. A senior staff member includes Managers, Coordinators, Team Leaders and/or supervisors.

#### **4.3. Internal review of an East Waste decision**

- 4.3.1. Where a complaint has been escalated to a more senior member of staff and the customer is dissatisfied with the outcome, the customer may wish to request an Internal Review.
- 4.3.2. An Internal Review of an East Waste decision is available under Section 270 of the Local Government Act 1999. This is a process established by Legislation that enables a Council or subsidiary to reconsider all the evidence relied upon to make a decision, including new evidence if relevant.
- 4.3.3. Requests for an Internal Review should include full details on the decision that the complainant is wanting to be reviewed, the date of the decision, the reason for seeking the decision and the details of the person that made the decision. Request for an Internal Reviews can be made in writing to the East Waste General Manager at: [east@eastwaste.com](mailto:east@eastwaste.com).
- 4.3.4. Due to the limited administrative resources at East Waste, requests for internal review may be assigned to an East Waste Member Council, which ensures the presence of necessary policies, procedures, and resources. Involving a Member Council also enhances the Internal Review Process by introducing an additional level of independence and transparency. Additionally, the East Waste Board will be notified of any requests for Internal Review.

#### **4.4. Submitting a Complaint**

- 4.4.1. No distinction will be made between the method of making the complaint, i.e. whether made online, in person or over the telephone. Complaints made or received through any form of media will be accepted, however, depending on the seriousness and complexity of the complaint, the complainant may be requested to provide further information in a defined form (i.e., in writing), taking into account the individual's circumstances/capability.
- 4.4.2. To assist East Waste in effectively managing a Complaint the person(s) submitting the Complaint should provide sufficient information to assist East Waste in investigating the concerns including a summary of what the Complaint is about and any relevant key information such as but not limited to:
  - Complainants Name & Contact information
  - Location
  - Date/Time of issue
  - East Waste employee's name (if applicable/available).

4.4.3. To submit a Complaint please contact East Waste via any of the below options:

- Email: [east@eastwaste.com](mailto:east@eastwaste.com)
- Phone: (08) 8347 5111
- Online form: [www.eastwaste.com.au](http://www.eastwaste.com.au).

#### **4.5. Handling a Complaint**

4.5.1. Upon receiving a Complaint East Waste will contact the complainant as soon as possible and within two (2) business days from the time of submission to:

- 4.5.1.1. Confirm receipt of the Complaint.
- 4.5.1.2. Resolve the Complaint if possible; and/or
- 4.5.1.3. Seek any additional information that may be required to investigate the Complaint and provide the likely timeframe required to investigate and resolve the Complaint.

4.5.2. In instances where a Complaint cannot be resolved at the point of confirming the receipt of the Complaint then the Complainant will be provided with regular updates about the progress of the Complaint.

4.5.3. Employees will be trained to manage complaints efficiently and effectively, and provided with a level of delegated authority appropriate for the nature of complaints they are expected to resolve.

#### **4.6. Remedies**

4.6.1. East Waste will, where practicable, remedy the situation in a manner which is consistent and fair for both East Waste and the customer(s). The solution chosen will be proportionate and appropriate to the circumstances. Sometimes, however, it may only be possible to offer an apology.

#### **4.7. Complainant rights to external review**

4.7.1. While East Waste prefers to work with its customers to resolve complaints quickly and effectively, a complainant will always retain the right to seek other forms of resolution, such as contacting their Member Council, Ombudsman, or taking/seeking legal advice.

4.7.2. Additional information regarding lodging a Complaint with the Ombudsman is available online at [www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au) or by calling (08) 8226 86 99 or 1800 182 150 (outside metro SA only).

Note: Generally, the Ombudsman prefers a complaint to be addressed by the Council/Subsidiary in the first instance, unless this is not appropriate in the circumstances.

#### **4.8. Unreasonable Complainant Conduct**

- 4.8.1. All complaints received by East Waste will be treated seriously and complainants will be treated courteously. However, occasionally the conduct of a complainant can make it challenging to resolve and/or investigate a complaint. This may take the form of unreasonable persistence, unreasonable demands, lack of cooperation or argumentative or threatening behaviour. What can be termed 'unreasonable' will vary depending on a number of factors and East Waste aims to manage these situations in a fair and equitable manner.
- 4.8.2. Where a complainant's behaviour is deemed unreasonable and/or consumes an unwarranted amount of East Waste's resources or impedes the investigation of their complaint, a decision may be made to apply restrictions on contact with the person. Before making any decision to restrict contact, the complainant will be warned that, if the specified behaviour(s) or actions continue, restrictions may be applied.
- 4.8.3. Any decision to suspend action on a complaint will be made by the General Manager and communicated in writing (where possible) to the complainant in addition to advising the East Waste Chairperson and the CEO of the applicable member Council, if relevant.

#### **4.9. Special Provisions**

- 4.9.1. There are specific procedures which apply to particular types of complaints. If the complaint would be more appropriately dealt with by another process, this will be explained to the complainant at the outset.

For example:

- Complaints against a Board Member, Audit and Risk Management Committee Member, the General Manager or employees under the applicable Behavioural Standards Policy.
- Freedom of Information applications.
- Claims for financial compensation e.g., insurance claims.
- Persons claiming protection under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2018*.

## **5. Legislation**

*Local Government Act 1999*

*Freedom of Information Act 1991*

*Public Interest Disclosure Act 2018*

*Ombudsman Act 1972*

## **6. Related Documents**

Behaviour Standards Policy

Internal Review of Decision Procedure

## 7. Review

This Complaints Handling Policy shall be reviewed within three (3) years of issued date or more frequently if legislation or organisational needs change.



Signed

General Manager

Date 22/06/2023



Signed

Chair East Waste Board

Date 22/06/2023

## 8. Document History

Version No:	Issue Date:	Description of Change:
1.0	June 2023	New Document